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## Michigan Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Permit Public Participation Process Guidance

### Purpose

To facilitate the involvement of watershed jurisdictions, agencies, organizations, and the general public in the development of the Watershed Management Plan. Special effort should be made to involve those entities with the authority, ability, and desire to bring about necessary change by developing and implementing the Watershed Management Plan. An adequate Public Participation Process (PPP) will include the following parts:

### Part 1. General Information

- Identify the Watershed, as identified in your Certificate of Coverage (COC), for which this PPP has been developed.
- Identify the permittee(s) submitting this PPP.

### Part 2. Building the Team (Table)

Provide a 3-column table identifying:

- Column 1: Who you plan to involve in your watershed management planning process
- Column 2: The mechanisms you plan to use to bring those entities into your planning process
- Column 3: Who will be responsible for implementing each mechanism

### Table Column 1. Identifying Stakeholders

Identify all of the stakeholders in your watershed who will be specifically invited to participate in the watershed planning process. Remember that your watershed plan will be only as good as your ability to implement it. Include anyone who will be able to notably influence your ability to implement the recommendations in the plan. The following should be included, unless there are justifiable reasons why they are not applicable in your situation. They are listed here as general categories. The PPP should identify them by name; e.g., River Township Planning Commission.

1. All other MS4 permittees in your watershed, as defined in your permit application and COC. If this is identical to the information provided in Part 1, then you may reference Part 1.
2. Entities with jurisdictional MS4 permits.

3. Entities with authority over the following (some may already be MS4 permittees):
  - a. Operation and maintenance of infrastructure; e.g., public works, drain commissioner, road commission, city transportation department, MDOT.
  - b. Land management; e.g., planning commissions, zoning boards, those who conduct site plan reviews, parks and recreation.
  - c. Ordinance development and enforcement; e.g., local government boards and councils.
  - d. Enforcement of local programs relevant to water quality; e.g., soil erosion control agencies, health department (public and private sanitary systems).
4. Natural resource/environmental organizations; e.g., conservation districts, Department of Natural Resources, watershed councils, lake and resort associations, riparian organizations, Natural Resources Conservation Service, environmental protection societies.
5. Development organizations; e.g., chamber of commerce, economic development council, developers, builders.
6. Major local employers or industry groups.
7. Educational or outreach organizations; e.g., local school districts, universities, extension services, community volunteer groups, nature centers, zoos.
8. Other organizations important in your community or with something valuable to contribute to developing or implementing a watershed plan.
9. General public/open invitation. You must make special effort to ensure that the watershed planning process is in no way exclusive, and that anyone who wants to participate feels welcome.

### **Table Column 2. Soliciting Participation**

Sending a broad-based invitation letter is not likely to result in meaningful participation. Your goal is to have participants who will take an active role in developing and implementing the plan, not simply show up for a few meetings. These different organizations and agencies have different interests, and may not respond to the same type of solicitation. Target potential participants with a message that will inspire them to become an active participant in the watershed planning process. It is also important to recognize the iterative nature of soliciting participation. Initial attempts may not be successful; you will need ongoing efforts to make more people aware of the watershed planning process, and ensure that they are welcomed into it. Keeping in mind that you eventually need to implement your watershed plan, the mechanisms you use should convince stakeholders to get involved, and stay involved well beyond publication of the Watershed Management Plan.

### **Table Column 3. Responsible Party for Implementing this Task**

Identify who will ensure completion of the participation solicitation mechanism identified in Column 2.

### **Part 3. Communication During the Planning Process**

Identify the mechanisms you will use to ensure that there is adequate communication to your stakeholders throughout the watershed planning process, keeping in mind that many of these mechanisms should be carried forward into the plan's implementation period as well. To be effective, you should identify and implement multiple mechanisms for keeping your team, as well as the general public, informed about watershed planning. It is very important that you provide multiple opportunities for your community to provide input and feed-back. Consider the following:

1. e-mail distribution list for meeting notices, etc., to individually-identified members of your team;
2. a web-site with information about the Watershed Management Plan;
3. press releases to announce various milestones, including the kick-off of your planning process;
4. other types of communication to the local press;
5. attending meetings of local boards, councils, associations, and other interested groups;
6. articles in existing newsletters or circulars;
7. workshops, seminars, open-houses;
8. surveys; and
9. public notices and public meetings. These may be especially important in providing the general public with an opportunity to provide feed-back on your draft Watershed Management Plan.

### **Part 4. Time Line for the Planning Process**

Provide a time line, in monthly or quarterly increments, that lays out your schedule from the time the PPP is developed until the Watershed Management Plan is submitted to the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) (use the compliance dates in your Certificate of Coverage). The schedule should include your time frame for soliciting participation, general frequency of meetings, milestones for Watershed Management Plan development (e.g., data gathering, development of measurable goals, identification of remedies, providing a draft for public comment), and estimated dates for when the communication mechanisms in Part 3 will be initiated, completed, or ongoing.

### **Part 5. Dovetailing Watershed Management Planning with your Public Education Plan (PEP)**

Although initially on different schedules, your Watershed Management Plan and your PEP should be as integrated as soon as possible. Explain how you plan to integrate these two plans, including how you will utilize this PPP and your stakeholder team in PEP development (if you have yet to complete this), and PEP implementation.

### **Part 6. Coming to Agreement**

Identify the mechanism(s) you will use to come to agreement (e.g., majority vote, consensus) on difficult issues. Identify how you will document different points of view. Identify how you will resolve conflicts.

### **Part 7. Adaptive Management**

As noted above, your PPP efforts will likely be iterative. Identify a mechanism for tracking participation. Identify how you will evaluate the success of your public participation efforts. Identify steps you will take if your evaluation indicates that public participation was not adequate.